

Blenheim Library
N side State Rte. 658
Charlottesville
Albemarle County
Virginia

1004
HABS VA-~~1004~~

HABS.
VA.
2-CHAR.V
5A

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

REDUCED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013

Addendum to
Blenheim Library
State Rte. 727
Charlottesville vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1004

HABS
VA,
2-CHAR.V.
5A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS
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BLenheim LIBRARY

HABS No. VA-1004

Location: State Route 727, Charlottesville vicinity
Albemarle County, Virginia
Latitude: 37° 55' 45"
Longitude: 78° 30' 00"

Present Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Stuart F. Burgh
Blenheim Farm
Route 6, Box 202
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901

Present Occupants: Mr. & Mrs. Stuart F. Burgh

Present Use: Billiard Room

Statement of
Significance: The Blenheim library is a small,
elegant example of the combined
Greek and Gothic Revival styles
and is one of several architect-
urally distinguished buildings of
the Blenheim plantation complex.
The plantation is notable for its
association with the Carters, an
important landholding family in
colonial Virginia who were the
original patentees of the Blenheim
tract.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: In 1730 the eldest son of Robert "King" Carter, John Carter, Secretary of the Colony, patented 9350 acres in what is now Albemarle County. One of his sons, Edward Hill Carter, who was born at Shirley in 1733, inherited this land and was probably the builder of the original Blenheim house. As he apparently purchased some additional acreage adjacent to his father's patent, it is not known whether the house site was on this land or on the land originally patented in 1730. In 1799 an insurance

policy for Blenheim was issued to William Champe Carter, a son of Edward Carter. The insurance policy discloses that the structure was an H-shaped house measuring 60 feet X 20 feet and 32 feet X 56 feet, two stories high and built of wood. It was connected by a one story structure measuring 16 feet X 30 feet and was valued at \$3500.00. A deed for Blenheim and 905 acres was conveyed to James Ross of Fredericksburg in 1806. The buildings at Blenheim were valued at \$2000.00 in 1819. Listed as being located adjacent to Robert Carter's estate, Blenheim was described in 1825 as containing 3878 acres. In 1830 an addition of \$200.00 for buildings was listed. There are no further changes noted until ownership changes in 1846 when Blenheim was acquired by Andrew Stevenson. In 1846 the location of Blenheim was listed as "Carter's Mountain" and it was comprised of 1100 acres; Ross was still noted as the owner. Stevenson was listed as the owner in 1847 when an addition was made for \$1000.00 worth of building improvements. From 1848-1850 Blenheim was listed as containing 895 acres and the buildings were valued at \$1000.00. The other \$2200.00 worth of buildings were either moved before Stevenson acquired the property or they were located on property not sold to him. Although it is not known when the original structure was destroyed, it is thought that no buildings predating Stevenson's ownership survive. Stevenson was the builder of the present house and it was during his ownership that the library, which served also as a ballroom, was built to house his library of some 1500 volumes.

2. Date of construction: Circa 1850
3. Architect: Unknown

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

As the original patentees and builders of the first Blenheim house, the Carter's are the initial prominent family to be associated with the plantation complex. The grant was given to John "Secretary" Carter, the oldest son of Robert "King" Carter and Secretary of the Colony. His son, Edward, who built the first Blenheim house, represented the county in the House of Burgesses until he was succeeded in this office by Thomas Jefferson.

It is recounted that the coach bringing Thomas Jefferson and his bride, Martha, to Monticello was stalled at Blenheim because of snow. It was here that they are said to have rested and warmed themselves, later continuing on to Monticello on horses borrowed from Edward Carter.

General Phillips, the British Commander captured at Saratoga during the Revolutionary War, was detained at Blenheim during the winter of 1778-1779.

The property was acquired by Andrew Stevenson in 1846. Stevenson, the builder of the present house and the library, served as the Speaker of the House of Representatives and as the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Stevenson was a member of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia and served as Rector of that Board while in residence at Blenheim. It is generally acknowledged that the "Taney Cottage," part of the plantation complex, was built by Stevenson for his good friend and frequent guest, Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney.

C. Sources of Information

Files of the Virginia Landmarks Commission

Files of the Mutual Assurance Society,
Policy #353 (1799)

Albemarle County Deed Books

PART II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. The Blenheim Library is an example of the combined Greek and Gothic Revival styles.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: This one story structure is square in plan and measures approximately 36 feet 4 inches by 36 feet 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
2. Foundations: Cinder block and brick piers. Tree stumps have also been utilized as foundations. Round butt shingles, perhaps original to the structure, are used in two places to level the distance between the joist and the foundation pier.
3. Wall construction: Beaded vertical weatherboarding. The weatherboarding of the entire right side of the southeast elevation has been replaced.
4. Structural system: Wood interior framing.
5. Porches: Peristyle portico supported on Doric piers. The entablature is moulded pressed tin with a simple coved cornice.
6. Chimney: There is one brick chimney located on the southeast elevation.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doorways with semi-circular fanlights are located on the southwest and northeast elevations. Located on the northwest elevation, the main door, which has an elliptical fanlight, has also been enriched by fretwork of Asher Benjamin derivation. The doors located on the southwest and northeast elevations are French doors with glass panels.

- b. Windows and shutters: Two casement windows with Gothic Revival detailing are located on the southeast elevation. Attached louvered shutters are found only on the southwest door.

3. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: A pyramidal hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: Square in plan, this is a single story, one room structure.
2. Flooring: Narrow hardwood flooring with tongue and groove joints. All flooring on the left half of the room has been replaced.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster.
4. Trim: The ceiling is marked by a center circular medallion. The ceiling also has a coved cornice.
5. Hardware: Simple cast iron thumb latches and door handles are present on the French doors. The windows include simple hand latches.
6. Lighting: Presently the structure is not electrically wired.
7. Heating: The fireplace is the only source for heating the room.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The library is situated on top of a low hill among a complex of structures which includes the main house, chapel, and school that are all located to the southwest of the library. The gently, rolling hill is bordered by Route 727 to the northwest, and Lake Creek to the southeast. The newly restored Old Claim House for the original Carter grant is located on the adjacent property to the north. The library, itself, is oriented in a northwesterly direction facing the circular driveway and perpendicular to the main house.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was developed by students in the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Assistant Dean, in 1976. It was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey and was not completed under HABS supervision, nor edited by HABS staff.